

The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Powell:

I'm writing to urge you to support the proposed merger between EchoStar Communications and Hughes Electronics. I believe the merger holds tremendous potential for my company in PITTSBURG, CA which sells EchoStar's DISH Network satellite TV service. The new company will offer a more attractive product to consumers, and this will mean more business for my company.

The majority of my customers are not able to subscribe to their local broadcast channels via satellite because they live in a small television market. This is the case because DISH Network does not have sufficient spectrum to provide all local channels in every one of the country's 210 local television markets. Currently, EchoStar offers local broadcast channels in only 36 markets. The merger will allow the combined company to stop broadcasting more than 500 identical TV channels. This will increase capacity and allow the new company to serve all TV markets in the U.S. This will allow me to offer my customers a more competitive alternative to cable in the near future.

None of my customers currently have access to cable or DSL high-speed Internet access service, but it is clearly something that many of them want given the number of times I have heard them ask about it. If the merger is approved, the new Echostar will provide the homes and businesses in my area the first affordable high speed Internet access service. My customers will benefit from this merger because EchoStar and Hughes can combine their resources, satellites, and spectrum to provide high-speed satellite Internet access service on a basis that is price and quality competitive with cable modem service and DSL.

This merger will increase satellite TV's ability to respond competitively to the roll out of digital cable, forcing cable companies to respond in a variety of ways including accelerating their digital upgrades and extending their wires out to reach those customers they currently do not serve. The resulting expansion in digital capabilities across the board will increase competition generally, will drive hardware upgrades for consumers, and drive retail traffic and sales nationwide.

The new company has also pledged to offer new and enhanced services like interactive television and near video-on-demand. These products will allow satellite TV to go head-to-head in competition with cable companies and other competitors as they improve their technological capabilities.

The merged company will provide consumers with a lot of new services, but the availability of an affordable, nationwide high-speed Internet access product in the near future is the most important one to me. It is for this reason that I urge you to support the merger of EchoStar and Hughes Electronics.

Sincerely,

JAMES BURNHAM
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